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THE SENSE OF BEAUTY.



HERE is nothing which more distinctively marks true progress in education than the increasing breadth of view which is taken of the whole subject. Gradually we are discovering that man needs not merely the knowledge contained in text-books, and laid down in the various courses of study, but much that must be gleaned from other sources; that he has not only one set of faculties to be developed, but many; and that true culture includes the careful nurture of every part.

A much neglected power of our nature is the sense or perception of beauty. We all have this in its germ, but few of us ever think it worth our while to cherish and improve it. Yet there is scarcely one of our faculties that is so amply provided for in the external world as this.

Beauty pervades the entire universe. Mountains and valleys, forests and meadows, skies and oceans are full of it. The more we explore Nature the more do we discover of her loveliness. Science is every day revealing new beauty by her discoveries, and every accession of knowledge opens up charms of which we had never dreamed. Only a small portion of creation can minister to the necessities of the body, and that portion can only be made available by toilsome labor; but the sense of beauty has but to awaken to its own need to find the whole universe waiting to pour upon it the richest supplies. In most cases our desires far outrun their possible fulfilment, but in this it is just the reverse. Here it is the inner sense that needs developing to respond to the wealth of beauty that awaits its recognition.

It is as if, in an exquisite palace, filled with choicest pictures and statuary, and adorned with everything that taste could suggest to make it attractive, the inhabitants were partially blind, and could barely distinguish one article from another, much less comprehend the loveliness by which they were surrounded. The world is full of beauty that we barely see, or seeing, yet fail to understand or to enjoy.

It may, however, be questioned whether, after all, it is so important that this sense should be quickened and sharpened into keen appreciation. It does not help

a man to earn his living, or to grow rich; it does not give him standing in society or political power; it does not add to his stock of knowledge, or enable him to fight the battles of life with any more success. It is true that it does not directly promote these results, though through its culture some of them may be indirectly aided. Yet these are not the only things in life worth pursuing, though in our materialistic age we are apt to think so.

The joy that beauty confers is of itself no mean or trifling thing. Pure and innocent pleasures are the best safeguards against unwholesome excitements. He who early learns and retains the habit of enjoying external beauty, and letting its influence sink deeply into his nature, will not be greatly exposed to temptations of a gross nature.

Beauty is eminently refining, purifying, ennobling. As the eye which perceives it is the most delicate and sensitive of all the bodily organs, so the inner sense which responds to it is the most tender and refined of all the faculties. To cultivate and develop this sense, is then, to exalt the pleasures, to purify the desires, to

refine the feelings, to ennoble the aims. No one can expand and intensify his sense of beauty without being a better man, and breathing out a sweeter influence than before.

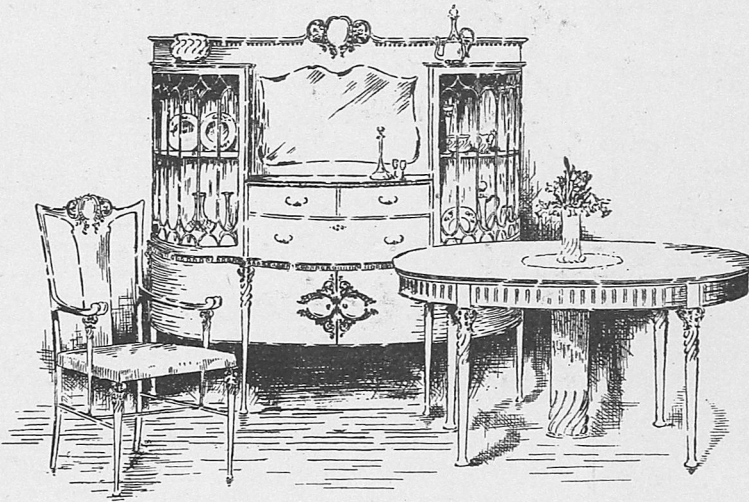
It may be, as Socrates declares, that outward beauty is but the emblem of expression of what is lovely, grand, or noble in the unseen or spiritual world. Certain it is that they are closely akin, and they act and react upon each other with the most perfect harmony.

Whoever is imbued with the sense of beauty will involuntarily create it around him. It will give a grace to his demeanor, a fitness to his

words, an harmonious proportion to his conduct. Good taste and consistency will shine in his domestic arrangements and in his business affairs.

Unconsciously, by his intercourse, he will develop the same power in others. Partaking of his pleasure and enthusiasm, they also will respond to the beauty around them with fresh joy and fervor. Let us, then, no longer neglect the culture of this important part of our nature.

Let us open our eyes and our hearts to receive all the beauty that they are capable of taking in; let us welcome its pure delights, and hasten to shed them on others; let us give it a place in our daily life and thoughts, and let its presence ever dwell in our homes, to bless and purify them.



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